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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000074

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DEPARTMENT FOR FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, SE WILLIAMSON,
IO, D, NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON, ADDIS ABABA PLEASE PASS
TO USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/20/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [AU](#) [UN](#) [CD](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: ISMAIL: CHADIAN MILITARY ESCALATION RISKS PUSHING
SUDAN TO WAR

REF: A. KHARTOUM 035
[1](#)B. NDJAMENA 018

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Presidential Advisor Mustafa Othman Ismail warned of growing Sudanese exasperation at what they see as Chadian military escalation on the Darfur border. He also expressed Sudanese frustration at obstacles to Sudanese diplomats performing their work in the U.S. and warned of possible counter measures affecting American diplomats in Sudan. He echoed regime suspicion of the newly appointed US Special Envoy to Sudan Ambassador Richard Williamson based on the written record. End summary.

CHADIAN WAR FEVER

[1](#)2. (C) Presidential Advisor Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail told CDA Fernandez on January 19 that repeated Chadian aerial bombardment of Sudanese territory in West Darfur (which has killed and injured Sudanese military and civilians in addition to Chadian rebels supported by Khartoum) represents a qualitative escalation in tension and aggression by the Deby Government and "risks provoking a Sudanese armed response if the Chadians continue bombing us." Ismail said that President Al-Bashir is "not just a politician but a military man" who will respond in kind to continued Chadian aggression. Ismail added that increased tensions between the two neighbors would not bode well for the rapid deployment of UNAMID (in Darfur) and EUFOR (in Chad). He asked that the United States weigh in with Chad, France and Libya on reducing tensions and getting the Chadians to stop their cross border bombing. He noted sarcastically that Chad was in lockstep with Sudanese Darfur rebel Khalil Ibrahim "who has been sanctioned by you, the Americans", for obstructing the peace process in Darfur. He contrasted "American and western silence" on Chad's military moves with the "exaggerated response" to an exchange of fire between Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and a UNAMID convoy.

[1](#)3. (C) Dr. Ismail said that both Sudan and Chad support each others rebels, "we all know that" but the latest repeated bombing runs by the Chadians was a "qualitative change" in the status quo. Charge Fernandez countered that many, including President Deby, may believe that the Sudanese (military and intelligence) were behind the bloody offensive launched in late 2007 by Chadian rebels seeking to overthrow Deby. Ismail said that this accusation of Sudanese interference was true before the May 2007 agreement between

Chad and Sudan brokered by Saudi King Abdullah but "we are not doing that anymore."

STICKS RATHER THAN CARROTS FOR THE AMERICANS

¶4. (C) Moving to bilateral relations, Ismail said that the Sudanese were seriously considering imposing a monthly surcharge of thousands of dollars on the US Embassy in Khartoum as a response to the monthly bank surcharge of \$3,000 that Khartoum's mission in Washington must pay. He said some senior officials want to close the Sudanese Embassy in Washington because of "continued American harassment" as a result of US sanctions on Sudan. This monthly irritant directly affected Sudanese flexibility on the building of the Khartoum NEC. CDA responded that every time we talk to the GOS about the NEC there is a new excuse or reason for the delay: a mortgage for the Washington embassy, sanctions, and now this surcharge issue. Ismail cheerfully countered that indeed the real problem was the poor state of relations but recalled several years ago when he tried to get the US to reverse a 25 mile from Washington limit for Sudanese diplomats, "I tried with Colin Powell and with Zoellick" but was only able to get a positive American response when Sudan began restricting American diplomats to travel only 25 miles from Khartoum. CDA said that the NEC issue was a security issue first and foremost and Sudan's refusal to allow us to finish the new building puts our people at risk from Al-Qa'ida style terrorism we have seen in places like Jeddah, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

¶5. (C) CDA asked Ismail about the recent appointment of notorious janjawid leader Musa Hilal as a government advisor.

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Ismail defended the appointment noting that the US had called for greater inclusion of Arab tribes into the Darfur political process and that former SE Natsios and Embassy officials had met with Hilal in late 2006 in South Darfur. CDA Fernandez agreed that incorporating Darfuri Arab voices into the mix was the right thing to do but hoped such inclusion would look to credible leaders beyond militia commanders like Hilal.

SPECIAL ENVOYS - PAST AND PRESENT

¶6. (C) Ismail continued by describing the view in the senior ranks of the Sudanese Government that former Special Envoy Natsios "was fired because he had moderated his views on Darfur." Natsios had called for pressure on Darfur rebels (especially Abdul Wahid Nur), had begun to understand the complexity of the reality on the ground in Darfur and in Sudan as a whole and he had seen that the situation in Darfur had "greatly improved and that there was no genocide today." for these reasons "the hawks in Washington had forced him out." CDA corrected Ismail noting that Natsios had resigned, he had not been fired or forced out.

¶7. (C) Ismail said that the Sudanese leadership had a big file on new SE Williamson and "none of it gives us much hope." He said that Ambassador Williamson had called the violence in Darfur "genocide," and had advocated in writing a no-fly zone and US military intervention in Sudan. CDA responded that the President had also called the violence in Darfur "genocide" but that official American analysis did not preclude the US seeking a negotiated solution to Darfur's problems. He urged that Sudan should keep an open mind on Williamson. Ismail agreed and suggested that either a detailed road map on step by step confidence building measures between the two countries be worked out before Williamson's visit or that he come prepared for such discussions. "We can solve our problems but we both need to be precise about what needs to change and how exactly to go

about it," he remarked.

18. (C) Comment: UN Special Envoy Eliasson later on January 19 echoed the concern about rising tensions between Chad and Sudan he had heard from other Sudanese officials so this is a message the regime is eager to get out. The claim by Ismail, however, that Sudan ceased its aggressive support for Chadian rebels after the May 2007 agreement is preposterous (Chadian and Libyan support for Sudanese Darfuri rebels has also continued unabated since then). While Ismail's call for a US-Sudan "roadmap" is a common refrain that suits the mindset of a regime that loves form over substance and process over results, it is true that a clear and concise understanding of what exactly is most important to us, and what incentives and pressures we are prepared to use, is an important prerequisite to success in talking to the Sudanese regime.
End comment.
FERNANDEZ